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Letter dated 19 November 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the ministerial communiqué adopted at the second annual ministerial meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, held on 14 November 2001 in New York (see annex).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 95 (a).

(*Signed*) Alounkeo **Kittikhoun**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

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Annex to the letter dated 19 November 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Communiqué of the second annual ministerial meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

(14 November 2001, New York)

We, the Ministers of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, having met at United Nations Headquarters during the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, on 14 November 2001,

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration (see General Assembly resolution 55/2), which recognizes the special needs and problems of landlocked developing countries, and urges both bilateral and multilateral donors to increase financial and technical assistance to this group of countries to meet their special development needs and to help them overcome the impediments of geography by improving their transit transportation system (para. 18),

Recalling also the ministerial communiqué adopted at the first annual ministerial meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries on 18 September 2000 in New York (A/C.2/55/2, annex), which has institutionalized the annual ministerial meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries,

Having assessed the progress in implementing the specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries and the Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation between Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and the Donor Community (TD/B/42 (1)/11-TD/B/CDC/AC.1/7, annex I), solemnly declare the following:

1. We reconfirm our commitment to pursue a collective and constructive course of action at the United Nations and other relevant forums for the promotion and protection of our common interests, especially free and unimpeded transit access by all means of transport and the establishment of efficient transit transport systems. We shall also continue to seek and reinforce genuine international and regional cooperation for sustainable development and effective integration of our countries into the world economy;

2. We re-emphasize that, among the developing countries, the landlocked developing countries are generally the most vulnerable group with the weakest growth rates, and are heavily dependent on a limited number of commodities for their export earnings. The landlocked developing countries, when compared with other countries, lack territorial access to and from the sea as well as sea-based resources. The state of landlockedness, when compounded by remoteness and isolation from major world markets, imposes serious constraints on the overall socio-economic development efforts of our countries;

3. The landlocked developing countries continue to suffer from high transport costs caused by geographical handicaps associated with inadequate infrastructure facilities, additional border crossings, and dependence on transport policies and tariffs of their transit neighbours, as well as weak managerial, procedural, regulatory and institutional systems. Such high transport costs undermine our competitiveness in international markets;

4. Against this background, we are deeply concerned that, in the globalizing world economy, the landlocked developing countries are increasingly being marginalized and that, consequently, our countries have not been able to take full benefit of the new trade and investment opportunities offered by the processes of liberalization and globalization;

5. We endorse the agreed conclusions and recommendations adopted at the fifth Meeting of Governmental Experts from Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Representatives of Donor Countries and Financial and Development Institutions, held in New York from 30 July to 3 August 2001, which contain important action-oriented measures aimed at adequately addressing multifaceted issues of transit trade;

6. We believe that the most important achievement of the fifth Meeting of Governmental Experts was its

decision, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/199 of 22 December 1999, to recommend the convening of an International Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and Financial and Development Institutions in 2003 in Kazakhstan. We most sincerely believe that the International Ministerial Meeting will afford a historic opportunity for landlocked developing countries to agree on ways and means to promote their growth and to integrate their economy into the global economy by revitalizing their partnership and cooperative arrangements with transit neighbours and by developing landlocked developing countries' efficient transit transport systems, which are indispensable for arresting and reversing continued marginalization in the world economy. We reiterate our call to all countries and relevant stakeholders to attach the greatest urgency and importance to this event. We welcome and appreciate the generous offer made by the Government of Kazakhstan to host the International Ministerial Meeting;

7. An important task of the International Ministerial Meeting will be to review the implementation of the Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation between Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and the Donor Community and to adopt a plan of action for transit transport cooperation. The plan of action should address the particular problems and needs related to landlocked developing countries in a holistic manner, taking into account the developmental dimension, adequate infrastructure, free and unimpeded transit access, and policy, legal, procedural and institutional aspects;

8. We emphasize that the credibility and action-oriented outcome of the International Ministerial Meeting will rest critically on the quality of preparations. The preparation for the International Ministerial Meeting should be based on serious substantive and deliberative work at the regional and global levels with the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, and professional, regional and international organizations. The meeting should draw on national, bilateral, subregional and global experiences of transit trade cooperation and lessons learned from global conferences. For this purpose, subregional meetings should be held as a part of the preparatory process for the ministerial meeting, to exchange views and build up consensus on the subregional dimension of transit transport cooperation and priority areas for action. The findings and outcomes of the subregional meetings, together with the outcomes of the five successive meetings of governmental experts from landlocked and transit developing countries, should be utilized as substantive inputs for the preparation of documentation for the senior officials meeting. The senior officials meeting should be convened to provide substantive preparation of the International Ministerial Meeting;

9. We urge our development partners, relevant intergovernmental and multilateral institutions and professional organizations to take appropriate steps to ensure that adequate preparations are undertaken for the International Ministerial Meeting. We also invite them to participate effectively in the preparatory process, and to support landlocked developing countries in their own preparation and participation in the International Ministerial Meeting itself;

10. We emphasize that the special problems and needs of the landlocked developing countries and the issue of improving their competitiveness should also be adequately addressed within the scope of negotiations of the World Trade Organization with a view to mobilizing international attention and support in favour of landlocked developing countries. The World Trade Organization should give due attention to the special problems confronting landlocked developing countries in the international trading system as a result of their disadvantaged geographical position and ensuing economic vulnerability. Such a geographical handicap imposes upon them excessive trade transaction costs. For landlocked developing countries, the high costs of trade logistics are a more considerable barrier than tariffs. We therefore consider that efficient trade facilitation measures are necessary and beneficial. We urge the secretariat of the World Trade Organization to give priority attention to landlocked developing countries in its exploratory and analytical work on the simplification of trade procedures in order to assess the scope of World Trade Organization rules in this area. We also call upon all States members of the World Trade Organization to facilitate the entry of landlocked developing countries into the World Trade Organization, considering these countries' disadvantaged position and their inability to meet conditions;

11. We attach great importance to the process of financing for development. The preparatory process as well as the International Conference on Financing for

Development itself, which will be held in March 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico, should adequately address all aspects of development financing in a sustained and holistic manner and should lead to a new paradigm for mobilizing financial resources needed for development. While addressing all aspects of development financing, the Conference must take into account the special problems and needs of landlocked developing countries;

12. The World Summit on Sustainable Development and its preparatory process should provide an opportunity to assess in a comprehensive manner the achievements and shortcomings in the implementation of Agenda 21. In this regard, we believe that for the World Summit to have a special political impact on strengthening international consensus on sustainable development in the years to come, opportunities should be sought to relieve pressures on the world's most vulnerable and marginalized, including landlocked developing countries, in order to assist them in reaping the benefits of globalization and ensuring sustainable development;

13. We commend the continued contribution made by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in formulating international policies and measures dealing with the special problems of landlocked developing countries;

14. We urge the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in close cooperation with the World Bank, the regional commissions and other relevant regional and international organizations, to provide effective preparation for the International Ministerial Meeting. In this context, we also urge the Secretary-General to allocate adequate resources for the programme in favour of landlocked developing countries.